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The Next Step in Changing the World

October 26, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write to you today as a collective of 131 affiliate groups of National Peace Corps Association (NPCA), representing more than 87,000 individuals from across our nation, to respectfully request that you support a funding increase for the Peace Corps in your Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 budget submission to Congress.

Our hope is that you will request that the budget grow from the FY21 appropriated level of \$410.5 million and the current FY22 debated level, which ranges from \$430 million to \$450 million, to a new level of \$500 million in FY23. Doing so will provide sufficient funding for both long-overdue reforms and a return to the field for the agency.

As we recently marked the 60th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's signing of the Peace Corps Act into law, we are reminded of what these decades of service have meant to so many of our fellow citizens here at home and around the world. Surveys conducted earlier this year show that 77 percent of Americans support the expansion of national service programs, like our very own Peace Corps. Moreover, 44 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 to 28 indicated they would be willing to serve themselves.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to deeply impact the daily lives of billions, the Peace Corps hopes to return volunteers to the field for the first time since global operations were temporarily suspended in March 2020. Upon coming home, these volunteers (and others who preceded them) faced the pandemic head on, serving their local communities through donating blood, helping food banks, making masks, and working as COVID-19 contact tracers, among other selfless acts. Their work is a testament to the strength and character of the Peace Corps community.

Moreover, this pandemic provided an opportunity for the Peace Corps community to take stock in the work of the agency and to provide recommendations on how to build back a better Peace Corps when it returns to the field. This community conversation about that future led to the development of the *Peace Corps Connect to the Future* report, which provided clear recommendations on how the Peace Corps could more effectively re-enter into the world.

The *Peace Corps Connect to the Future* report delves into many issues, but its main themes argue for greater action in addressing systemic racism, increasing community-driven programming, and leveraging our current moment to create broad, positive change. These themes echo the leadership that America needs right now, leadership that you have shown in your administration. Making these recommendations – and the needed reforms – will not just require the leadership that you have shown about America’s role in the world; it will also require real funding to meet the need. That is why we are asking that your next Peace Corps budget be \$500 million.

In your inaugural address, you spoke to America saying, “We will repair our alliances and engage with the world once again. Not to meet yesterday’s challenges but today’s and tomorrow’s. We will not merely lead by the example of our power but by the power of our example.” We support you and your administration in meeting the challenges of our times as America reengages the world through our greatest asset – our people. We therefore humbly ask that you submit a FY23 Peace Corps budget to Congress that matches this critical goal.

Sincerely,

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